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NSC BRIEFING

27 September 1955

CAMBODIA

- I. In Cambodia, ex-king Sihanouk, after his party made clean sweep of 11 September elections, has agreed to become prime minister.
 - A. Heretofore, he has preferred less-exposed role and willingness to take on premiership reflects self-confidence.
 - B. He told Ambassador McClintock that he was not as crazy as most people had supposed; said, "I may be eccentric, but there is method to my eccentricity."
- II. In winning all 91 seats for new parliament, Sihanouk's newly-organized "movement", the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (SRN) was embarrassingly successful.
 - A. Ex-king's popularity in countryside undoubtedly great, but intimidation by government officials contributed to lopsided victory.
 - B. However, Indian truce officials gave stamp of approval to actual conduct of elections.
 - C. Once-powerful Democratic Party, which includes nearly all educated Cambodians, got less than 25% of vote; Communists polled less than 4% of total vote.
 - D. There is danger that educated elite may be estranged from government and monarchy; if they are excluded from political role some may make common cause with Communists.

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- III. Cambodian foreign policy will remain vaguely neutralist but Sihanouk and his advisors recognized their dependence on West--particularly US.
- IV. Vote of party congress on 25 September to leave the French Union is logical step in Cambodia's assertion of complete independence.
 - A. This action has long been sought by the Cambodian but at this time reflects Sihanouk's long-standing grudge developed by high-handed French treatment.